

February 23, 2021

Dear Members of the Behavioral Health Policy Committee,

At Volunteers of America of Minnesota (VOA of MN) we are deeply committed to serving children, youth, and families with services that meet their complex and unique needs. VOA of MN operates three children's residential treatment facilities in the state of Minnesota for children and adolescents who have histories of significant trauma and struggle with serious mental illness. Over the years, we have helped thousands of children return to stability after trauma and crisis.

Today we are writing in support of **HF944** which ensures that medical necessity should be the only requirement for access to children's residential mental health treatment. An alternate pathway for families with children with serious mental illnesses reduces barriers to access for these children to receive necessary and timely mental health treatment and support.

One in five young people experience a mental health problem during their school years. For millions of children, treatment can transform lives-but not nearly enough have access to care. At Volunteers of America of Minnesota, we are working to close this gap. It is widely acknowledged that youth with mental illnesses and their families need access to the right level of mental health treatment at the right time including, when appropriate, residential treatment services. At the core of our "never give up" approach is a belief that all youth have the ability to reach their full potential.

Your support of the HF944 bill is greatly needed and appreciated. Its passage will promote efforts to ensure all children and adolescents have timely access to medically necessary mental health treatment.

Once again, thank you for your leadership and public service on behalf of children, youth, and families. Please do not hesitate to contact me at Julie.Manworren@voamn.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Julie Manworren
President and CEO